

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK007
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Name of Service:	Acorns Montessori School
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Address of Service:	Cahervalley, Crecora, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 WPD7
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nancy Keyes
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	04/05/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	8	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, Henry Street Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect	
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).	

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Acorns Montessori school is a private preschool facility located in Crecora, in a rural setting, not far from Limerick city. The service was opened in 2005. It operates Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 12.00md. It presently caters for a maximum of 11 pre-school children. It provides a service for children between the ages of 2 years and 8 months to 5 years. The service operates from a purpose-built, single-story building located on the grounds of the registered providers home. A securely enclosed outdoor play area is located at the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and person who operates the service. She has achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. She engages in ongoing professional training and development in all areas of Early years education.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well- being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was announced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings.

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Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re-occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

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(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider was present on the day of the inspection. There was a second person available close by the facility who could be called on in the event of an emergency.

(b) The staff roster indicated that the provider was always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written references were available for the registered provider.

(b) Both references were from the providers previous employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for the registered provider and for the second person who could be called on to assist in the event of an emergency.

(d) Police vetting was not required for the registered provider or for the person she may call on in an emergency.

(4) The registered provider and her relief person both held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection there were 8 pre-school children under the supervision of the registered provider. The adult/child ratio was correct in the facility.

(3) The registered providers ensured that at all times the number of children present in the service met the requirements of the regulations.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

(1) All children's registration forms were reviewed. The service had a record in writing containing the following particulars for each of the children.

- (a) The name and date of birth of the child.
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service.
- (c) provision to record the date on which the child ceased to attend the service.
- (d) The name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service.
- (e) Authorisation for the collection of the child.
- (f) Details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention.
- (g) The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.

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- (h) record of immunisations received by the child.
- (i) Written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) all documents and records relating to references and Garda and police vetting obtained under Regulation 9(2) are retained for a period of 5 years from the date on which the person to whom the document or record relates commences working in the service, and*
- (b) a record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service, or in the case of a preschool service*

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in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service, for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered providers ensured that a record in writing was kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the persons in charge.
- (b) Details of the type of service in operation and the age profile of children for which the facility is registered to provide services.
- (c) Details of the adult: child ratios in the service.
- (d) The type of care or programme provided in the service. This was clearly displayed on the wall of the school near the entrance for parents to read.
- (e) The facilities available.
- (f) The opening hours and fees.
- (g) A record in writing was maintained of policies and procedures required in accordance with Regulation 10 and were found to be comprehensive and detailed.
- (h) Details of attendance by each pre-school child daily.
- (i) Rosters were maintained on a daily basis and available for inspection. These correlated with the numbers that were present on the day of inspection.
- (j) The service had a medication administration record template available that could be used in the event of a child requiring medication to be administered at the service
- (k) Details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(2) The service manager stated the following:

- (a) All documents and records relating to references and Garda vetting obtained under Regulation 9(2) were retained for a period of 5 years from the date on which the person to whom the document or record relates commences working in the service.
- (b) A record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) was retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

The services objective was to ensure that each child's learning, development and well-being was supported within the daily life of the facility. There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service to encourage and educate the children about the importance of good nutrition. The parents supplied healthy snacks and drinks for the pre-school children. Perishable foods were stored in a refrigerator if required.

Children had unrestricted access to the toilets which were located next to the Preschool room. Hot water, liquid soap and paper handtowels were accessible to ensure hygienic hand washing. Foot pedal operated, lidded bins were used for the safe disposal of used tissues and handtowels.

A change of clothes was available for all children if needed. Protective clothing was available for children when engaging in messy play activities. Outdoor clothing was available to ensure children got opportunity for outdoor play regardless of the weather conditions.

A rest area was accessible next to a reading area if children wished to relax and have quiet time away from the active play settings. Soft furnishings were available in this space to promote a relaxed environment.

Children got outside every day for outdoor playtime regardless of weather conditions.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The pre-school room was a large spacious room with areas of activities clearly defined to encourage children to work individually or in larger or smaller play groups sizes. All materials were stored on low height, open shelving. Low level tables and chairs were used to facilitate dining at break time and for tabletop activities such as art and craft exercises.

Children were encouraged to choose freely activities of their choice which were displayed in the room. The materials and play equipment in the room were grouped into the following areas; home corner, an imagination play area, a work/tool bench, an art/craft's area with art paper, paint brushes, paint and glue accessible and a

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Montessori teaching area with lots of Montessori play materials on display. A quiet relaxation area was created in the library corner.

Artwork was displayed at the child's eye level. Posters displayed in the room promoted learning in various topics such as seasons, colours, letters, sounds and Irish vocabulary.

The children had free access each day to an outdoor play area at the rear of the premises. This area was covered with soft impact, rubber matting and was available for use by the children regardless of the weather conditions. A large polytunnel was located next to the playground. Sand and water play was available in this area. Lots of space was available in the tunnel for digging, planting and growing vegetables and flowers.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider had completed first aid responder training and the cert was in date up to March 2025.

(2)(a) There was a well-stocked first aid box located on the premises.

(b) The first aid box was readily available and easily accessible if required.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) Fire drills were carried out monthly. The most recent drill took place on the 26/04/2023.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises with the most recent service of the equipment carried out in September 2022.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the Preschool room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The registered provider had a current insurance certificate which outlined that adequate insurance was available for 11 preschool children to attend the service. The insurance cover commenced on the 28th of March 2023 and expired on the 27th of March 2024.